

Recreation

Background

As the populations of the Municipality of Anchorage and the MSB have increased in recent years, so has the use of the Knik River valley. As a result, more users are competing for the resources available in this area.

OHV use related to recreation, hunting and fishing has increased significantly in the Knik River Valley in recent years. As a result, numerous trails have been created and areas that previously received little or no motorized use are now seeing frequent use. This has resulted in numerous trails being created across wetlands, waterbodies and environmentally sensitive areas. See Map 2-4, pp. 2 - 37 for a depiction of wetlands within the PUA. Because of the increased use, conflicts have developed between users. While additional trails provide more opportunities to access the PUA for some, others are displaced. Non-motorized recreation opportunities are limited within the public use area.

Recreational use patterns have predictable spatial and temporal characteristics and seasonality of use. During the hunting and fishing seasons, use increases across the entire PUA but is highest during weekends and holidays. Areas such as the Friday and Metal creek drainages, which normally see little use, see frequent use as hunters access the area in search of moose, sheep and goats. Maude Road and Mud Lake receive higher use during fishing, waterfowl and moose hunting season. Use of expansive wetland areas increases too as hunter's traverse these areas while moose and waterfowl hunting. The area around the mouth of Jim Creek receives increased use as coho salmon return to spawn in early fall.

Outside of the hunting and fishing seasons, use is limited during the week and is the highest on weekends and holidays. During these times, the Pavilion Parking Area is often filled to capacity and the access points near the Old Glenn Highway Bridge are heavily used. The parking area at Jim Lake also receives increased use. OHV use is high in the vicinity of the mouth of Jim Creek and the Old Glenn bridge, and progressively decreases further up the valley in the direction of Knik Glacier. Low to moderate levels of OHV and highway vehicle use occurs at the Knik Glacier.

Shooting is frequent at many locations, but primarily occurs at existing user created "shooting areas." On weekends, as evening approaches and more individuals arrive in the PUA, unlawful activities become more frequent. Such activities include the wrecking and burning automobiles, reckless shooting, and underage drinking.

Goal

- Protect and maintain habitats for fish and wildlife while perpetuating and enhancing recreational use.

Management Guidelines

- The Trails Management Process⁶ (TMP) should identify trails that have significant negative impacts to fish and wildlife habitat. The impacts of these trails should be minimized through re-routing spatial and/or temporal restrictions, or in some cases, closure of trails.
- The TMP should identify opportunities to develop new trails within the planning area to maintain or enhance motorized and non-motorized use within the planning area. These trails should be developed consistent with the following guidelines:
 - New trails within the planning area will be developed as sustainable trails and should be sited to avoid sensitive areas and be designed to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats.
 - If new facilities or trails cannot avoid sensitive areas including waterfowl nesting habitat, fish spawning and rearing areas, moose calving concentration areas, or swan or loon nesting areas, they should be designed and developed to minimize adverse impacts to these resources.
- DNR will identify particularly sensitive habitats and provide management guidelines and recommendations that will avoid or minimize impacts to these habitats. See Trails and Wildlife and Fish sections below.
- Current and expected future increases in OHV and highway vehicle uses should continue on the forested state uplands adjacent to the Pavilion Parking area, the forested uplands in Unit A and the unvegetated shorelands of the Knik River in units A and C. See Map 2-3, pp. 2 - 35 for a depiction of this area. This area should be managed for increasing use levels. Ground disturbance and rutting related to current OHV and highway vehicles uses has less impact on the identified area than on the adjacent habitats. Except for impacts related to rutting and ground disturbance, uses in the area described above remain subject to all local, state, and federal authorities for other impacts associated with their use. DNR should amend regulations to allow activities that cause rutting and ground disturbance in excess of 6 inches in the area identified above.

Goal

- Provide for the protection and use of wetlands.

Management Guidelines

- Redundant trails or trails determined by DNR to have significant negative impacts on wetland functions should be closed to use. The closure of trails will be based upon the results of the TMP.

⁶ The Trails Management Process is described in detail in Appendix D.

- 1 • New trails in wetlands should be avoided, but if no reasonable alternative location
2 exists, they should be developed in a manner that minimizes impacts to the wetlands
3 excluding the area depicted on Map 2-3, pp. 2 - 35. In all cases such trails should be
4 developed as sustainable trails.
- 5 • Recreational public facilities and projects should avoid wetlands and areas of
6 sensitive fish and wildlife habitat.
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**Map 2-3: Forested Uplands & Un-vegetated Shorelands in Management
Units A & C**

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Map 2-4: Wetlands